
SOCIAL STUDIES KICK-OFFS

Rosary School

Manning, Alberta, Canada

The goal of the Social Studies Kick-Offs was to improve the percentage of students meeting the acceptable/excellence standard of the Social Studies Nine Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) to 75%. The district had received PAT scores that were lower than the provincial average. This was of great concern to the school because social studies was the only core course that had low scores. The Action Team for Partnerships believed that if parents understood what was being taught in social studies, and the importance of the PAT, scores might begin to improve. Also, with greater knowledge, parents might be able to help the students at home. The Action Team and the social studies teacher collaborated to invite the ninth-grade students and their parents to an evening of food, fun, and games that highlighted the next topic the ninth graders were studying in social studies.

For each of the two Kick-Offs, the Action Team created a menu related to the topic and then found funding for the food. The Kick-Offs were held in the school gym from 6:30 -8:00 pm. The Action Team set up games that fit the topic being introduced and awarded donated door prizes. The events were publicized through invitations and the school newsletter. All staff members were invited to participate.

For the Russian Kick-off, the Action

Team created a menu consisting of borscht, Russian rye bread, and a Russian crepe dessert. A local caterer provided the food at a reduced rate. Invitations to the Bolshevik Banquet (Communist Economy) were sent home with the students, as well as through the mail. A phone call was made to each family three days before the evening to confirm attendance. The Action Team and the social studies teacher set up the gym with decorations of Russian flags, maps, and pictures of leaders. They also showed a PowerPoint presentation during supper to highlight the four leaders that influenced Russia the most— Lenin, Stalin, Marx, and Gorbachev. Community members of the local theater group read monologues created by the Action Team about the four men's leadership. Students and their families completed a quick quiz on the information in the PowerPoint presentation and the monologues, and turned it in for door prizes. The local theater group donated tickets to see "Fiddler on the Roof" to each of the students attending the Kick-Off. Other prizes included a Russian composer's CD and two nesting dolls.

For the Canadian Mixed Economy Kick-Off, the Action Team created a menu that only included food produced locally: bison, elk, beef, and wild boar roasts (donated by local farmers), a wheat salad, vegetables and dip, a honey dessert, and buns from the local

bakery. Again, a local caterer prepared the food. The gym was decorated with Canadian flags and maps. The Action Team created a game of Jeopardy, which highlighted the local economy (forestry, oil and gas, agriculture, and tourism and technology). The social studies teacher dressed up as Alex Trebeck, and the families competed as teams to answer the questions. Parents received the Provincial Achievement Test parent guide to help them understand what would be expected of the students. Those families unable to attend the Kick-Off still received the booklet.

Parent attendance at the Kick-Offs was the main challenge. Student-made and delivered invitations, plus invitations sent through the mail and a phone call to confirm attendance, helped increase attendance. Eighty percent of the parents came to the first topic Kick-Off in January; 87% of the parents came to the second topic Kick-Off in May. Creating games, PowerPoint presentations, and involving the community also helped increase attendance and enjoyment. Of course, serve food, and they will come!

The Social Studies Kick-Offs benefited everyone. Students and parents were introduced to the topics to be covered in social studies. Parents met the social studies teacher in person in a relaxed setting. Community members helped support activities linked to student achievement. One parent said they can't wait for their next child to be in ninth grade. Another stated that it was wonderful to spend an evening with just their ninth-grade child. The social studies teacher reported having fun with the game-type atmos-

phere. Next year, the Action Team will try to extend the festivities to other grades and subjects.

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